

The Print Club of New York Inc

Fall 1997

President's Greeting

Julian Hyman

Welcome back from a pleasant and productive summer. Once again the new Fall season is upon us and the Print Club of New York has lined up an interesting agenda for the new season. On September 23 Stanley Boxer, who is a very well known and much respected artist, discussed the Presentation Print that he created for the Club. On October 14th we held our annual Artists Showcase at the National Arts Club. This event has always been of great interest, and through the efforts of Muriel Moss and her wonderful committee this year continued the tradition.

During the summer months, thanks to the efforts of Dennis Mack and our Treasurer, Norman Brock, our Certificate of Incorporation was amended to comply with current New York State regulations. We remain a non-profit organization with the purpose of education in fine prints and printmaking. The Club will promote fellowship and help improve their members' collections through educational exhibitions, lectures and panel discussions by experts in the field of printmaking and preservation of prints.

An exciting summer membership event was held in July at the Susan Teller Gallery. The title of the show was "Shall We Dance," and many members took advantage of the opportunity to view this excellent print show. We wish to thank Susan Teller for graciously hosting the event. One of our outstanding members, Frederick Mersheimer, who created the first Presentation Print for the Club, has become a Board Member of the Manhattan Graphics Center and will head an event in December which will allow our Club members to meet other artists working in a variety of print making techniques.

Although our Club roster is nearly full, there will be a few openings available. It is our hope that these openings will create an opportunity to recruit new members who have both a sincere interest in fine prints and who will also share their expertise in ways that will be beneficial to the Club. We are looking forward to a most exciting, interesting and educational year.

The Print Club of New York, Inc.

P.O. Box 4477 Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
Tel: (212) 479-7915

Publications Committee:

Marilyn Ehrlich
Elaine Hyman
Arlyne Lesser
Geri Mickenberg

Newsletter Editor:

Arlyne Lesser

"Berkshire Glory"

by Stanley Boxer

The Print Club's 1997 Presentation Print

"Berkshire Glory", a color etching with aquatint by Stanley Boxer is the 1997 Presentation Print of the Print Club of New York. In this print through a gradation of autumn colors and nuances of color and line the artist has created a work which bridges representational art and abstraction.

Mr. Boxer has had a distinguished career as painter, sculptor and printmaker. He was awarded a Fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and a Visual Artists Fellowship Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). His work has appeared in many museum and gallery shows both in the United States and abroad. He has had numerous one-man exhibitions and his work is represented in the permanent collections of major museums including the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim Museum, The Boston Museum Of Fine Arts, the Corcoran Gallery and the Hirschorn in Washington, D.C., the Houston Museum of Fine Arts, the Walker Art Museum in Minneapolis and the Albright-Knox Museum in Buffalo.

As a printmaker, Mr. Boxer has worked with major presses and master printers in the United States, Canada and Germany. He has authored articles on printmaking and has exhibited his works on paper in various gallery and museum shows.

We are indeed fortunate in having the opportunity to add a Stanley Boxer print to our collections. We also would like to thank Mr. Boxer for agreeing to speak to Club members at the September Club meeting and to Stephen Long of the Long Fine Art Gallery for introducing Mr. Boxer.

More than 60 members were in attendance at the event. Rather than a formal presentation, Mr. Boxer responded to questions from the audience on his approach to printmaking as well as the evolution of this year's print. He also detailed his development as an artist over a career spanning 51 years. Although he came late to printmaking, work in this medium is for him another tool in becoming more complete as an artist. Creating art, he believes, is a reciprocal process. The more media in which the artist works, the more his imagination is kept keen. Printmaking, like painting and sculpture, is but one part of the whole, one aspect of the artist's entire career. Mr. Boxer also commented on his hyper-sensitivity toward self-imitation, toward repeating "What you do best." "How do you know what you do best?" he asked. Rather, he has continually and self-consciously tried to create works in each medium — painting, sculpture and printmaking — that do not imitate what he has done in the other media. He keeps each of his activities separate, and as a printmaker the plate is a new phenomenon, a thing in

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itself, and should not imitate his painting. Hence, he never had a press of his own and does not work on prints at his studio. He works directly with the printer, in the case of the Club's Presentation print, with Catherine Mosley who was Robert Motherwell's printer.

Speaking of this year's Presentation Print, an engraving and aquatint and how the imagery evolved in it, Mr. Boxer again stressed the element of spontaneity. He pointed out that he self-consciously avoids an initial drawing, a "vision," a motif, a *raison d'être* for getting the work started. He does not make initial drawings or tailor his imagination to a preconceived concept. Rather he begins with the marks on the plate and as the marks progress, osmoti-

cally rather than consciously, the image that is forming becomes clear. Thus, paradoxically, prints lend themselves to spontaneity even though they take so long to make because the image evolves as the artist works on the plate. To Mr. Boxer the sheer physicality, complexity and intensity of working in intaglio provides the challenge to the imagination which he considers crucial for artistic achievement. Mr. Boxer concluded by stating that he does not believe in working at "what I want to do," but rather at "what I must do" and that there is no buffer between the artist and his work. "Everything you do is major, and everything you do is you."

The Linocut Artistry of Sybil Andrews

Mary Ryan

Sybil Andrews is considered one of the finest linocut artists to emerge from London's Grosvenor School of Modern Art. Today artists connected with the Grosvenor School are of great interest to collectors, their

efforts being widely recognized as one of the most significant contributions to 20th century color printmaking.

Sybil Andrews was born in Bury St. Edmunds, England in 1898. She emigrated to Vancouver Island, Canada in 1947. Andrews studied with the English artist Claude Flight (1881-1955) at the Grosvenor School in London. Flight championed the linoleum block print as a simple and underrated art form and taught linocut printing to Andrews (along with fellow students Cyril Power, Edith Lawrence, Lill Tschudi, Eileen Mayo, Ronald Grierson, Dorrit Black, Ethel Spowers and Eveline Syme.)

Andrews made her first linocut in 1929 and has made about eighty linocuts in total, with about half of them being made between 1929 and 1939. Her work reveals her awareness of different modernist art movements including Futurism, Cubism and Vorticism. She was concerned with the depiction of movement and the purity of form as expressed by the activities of man, machine and the forces of nature. She used sweeping arches and meticulous carving to capture motion and layers of texture. Her vigorous style combines vibrant color with boldly patterned compositions that are always dramatic and rhythmic in their presence. For example, in her well-known print "Racing", the arches which trail behind the overlapped jockeys and horses suggest bullet-like paths, the action literally running off the page by way of cropping. Focusing on people — city dwellers, athletes, country laborers and machine workers — her complex compositions use repeated forms to catch a variety of moods. Thus in her whimsical print "Straphangers" the rocking arches are at once the commuters' arms and the hanging straps.

In recent years there has been a great deal of interest in the linocuts of Sybil Andrews. They have been featured in several American, English and Australian exhibitions. A major retrospective of her linocuts travelled to seven museums in Canada in 1982 and 1983 (accompanied by a catalogue raisonné by Peter White, published by the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, Alberta). Mary Ryan Gallery presented the first Sybil Andrews exhibition in the United States in 1983, and in 1988 the Rhode Island School of Design organized a major exhibit of the Grosvenor School artists which traveled to the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art. This year the Australian National Gallery is travelling the exhibition,

Upcoming Print Club Events

Saturday, November 15, 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Lecture and tour of the Newark Library's extensive print collection led by William Dane, Curator of Prints, the Newark Public Library.

Mr. Dane has had a distinguished career as art historian, author and lecturer with special expertise in prints. He has curated numerous print exhibitions and written widely on printmaking.

Monday, December 8, 6 p.m.

Frederick Mershimer who created the first Presentation Print for the Club will lead a demonstration of printmaking in various techniques at the Manhattan Graphics Center, 481 Washington Street.

Wednesday, March 18, 1998, 6 p.m.

Roberta Waddell, Curator of Prints, New York Public Library will speak on the Library's renowned print collection. Details to follow.

Also of interest to Print Club Members:

Picasso: The Engraver. Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, through December 21.

International Fine Print Dealers Association (IFPDA) Print Fair, 67th Street Armory, Park Avenue at 67th St. The preview will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 5. General admission, Thursday through Sunday, November 6-9. On Saturday, Nov. 8 at 1 p.m. James Ganz will present a free public lecture entitled "A Close Look at Print Connoisseurship."

Claude Flight and his Followers: The Colour Linocut Movement Between the Wars. Sybil Andrews' work is represented in numerous public and private collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Detroit Institute of the Arts, the Los Angeles County Museum of

Art, the British Museum, the Tate Gallery, the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Australian National Gallery.

Ms. Ryan wishes to thank staff members of the Mary Ryan Gallery for their assistance with this article.

Printmaking Techniques

Many of our members have requested information on printmaking techniques. We are pleased to present a short summary describing these techniques which was put together by the Education Department of the Katonah Museum of Art. We wish to thank the Education Department and its Director, Yvonne Pollack, for allowing us to reprint this summary.

A **WOODCUT** is a relief print. The process was used as early as the 1400's in Europe. The image is cut into a block of wood with straight or scooped knives called gouges. The raised uncut surface holds the ink. Paper is placed over the block and rubbed by hand or a press.

ENGRAVING, ETCHING, AQUATINT, and DRY-POINT are intaglio processes. The image is incised with a pointed tool or bitten with acid into a metal plate. Ink is rubbed into the grooves; the areas that hold the ink are below the surface of the plate. The differences among the various processes consist in how the grooves are made. They are all rolled through a press to print the image onto paper.

Engraving, a highly skilled craft was introduced around 1450. The grooves are cut directly into the metal plate with a burin, a sharp pointed steel rod set into a handle. The burin is pushed across the plate and cuts a clean V-shaped furrow. The slivers of metal that are forced up in front of the furrow are removed with an instrument called a scraper.

Etching, a process introduced in the early 1500's, uses acid to make the grooves. The plate is covered with a waxy coating. The image is drawn with a sharp needle that scrapes through the ground but does not scrape into the plate itself. The plate is then placed into an acid bath which eats into the exposed metal to make the

grooves. The waxy coating is removed before printing.

Aquatint is a variety of etching introduced in the 1650's that produces graduated tonal effects. Through a variety of means powdered resin is made to adhere to a metal plate. The metal that remains exposed around the tiny drops is bitten in an acid bath, creating a pitted grainy surface that holds a thin layer of ink, which prints as an area of tone.

Drypoint is a process that started in the 1500's. The grooves are cut directly into the plate with a needle-sharp instrument that is held like a pencil and pulled across the plate. The displaced metal is thrown up on either side of the scratched line and gives a velvety texture when inked.

LITHOGRAPHY and **SILKSCREEN** are **planographic** prints; the surface from which they are printed is flat.

The **lithography** process was discovered at the end of the 1700's. It is based upon the fact that grease and water do not mix. On a smooth stone or a metal plate the image is drawn with a greasy crayon or painted with greasy ink called tusche. The surface is covered with water, which is attracted only to the blank areas, and then inked. The ink adheres only to the greasy areas. A press is rolled over the stone or plate to transfer the image into paper.

Silkscreen (also called **serigraph**) is the newest printing process dating to the early 1900's. However, it is based on the stencil, one of the oldest graphic principles. A stencil is adhered to a silk screen and ink is forced through the mesh with a squeegee. The ink prints through the open areas onto the paper underneath. The stencil can be cut from thin material, or painted directly on the screen with a liquid block-out.

Spring and Summer Membership Events

Members Hear Symposium on What is a Print

A large and enthusiastic membership turnout marked the June 3 presentation of "What is a Print: A Symposium on Contemporary Printmaking" held at the Liederkrantz Club in New York City. Panelists included: Lynn Allen, printmaker and Professor of Art, Rutgers University who acted as

moderator; Joseph Goddhu, Director, Department of American Prints, Hirschl & Adler Galleries, Inc.; David Kiehl, Curator of Prints, The Whitney Museum of American Art; Alan Stone, Alan Stone Gallery; and Robert Feldman, publisher, the Parasol Press.

The topic is a significant one for collectors who are per-

plexed by the complexities of the field. New techniques in printmaking are producing computer driven prints, photographic images superimposed upon traditional techniques, prints that have been colored by hand, printing on non-traditional materials and unusual textiles. Given traditional definitions of what is a print, how do these new techniques and images fit these definitions? How shall we as collectors respond to the bewildering variety we encounter in contemporary printmaking? The concept of what is an original print has generated much discussion in the wake of these innovations, and we were fortunate in being able to bring together a panel of distinguished experts to respond to these questions.

Lynn Allen began the discussion by pointing out that formerly printmaking was defined by a painting-based aesthetic, traditional technical categories — woodcut, intaglio, mezzotint and lithograph — and a hierarchy based on the method of production. Offset, computer images, silk screen were valued less because they were considered too "commercial." Current printmaking, which she believes has reached the stage of a cohesive movement, is marked by three significant changes of direction.

First, the aesthetic has changed to focus on political and social purpose. Artists desire to bridge the distance between art and society and to serve the broader community. Art — and printmaking with it — is going beyond the studio gesture and has taken on a broader educational role focused on social activism and communication.

Second, the dichotomy between reprographic and original impressions is no longer considered significant. Printmakers are using computer generated images, photographs and mass reprographic techniques in order to serve what they consider the broader educational role of the creative artist. Third, although the quality of the image still matters and artists are trying to strike a balance between immediacy and craft, immediacy is considered crucial for conveying the artist's point of view on social and political issues. Hence, impatient of the delays inherent in traditional means of getting the image ready for the press, new techniques which enable the artist to quickly express his image have become increasingly important.

Ms. Allen then displayed the work of a number of contemporary printmakers using social and political images and mixed media such as photo etching combined with traditional etching, or collograph with etching, as well as a variety of new techniques and materials such as computer generated images, silk screen on tea bags, and installations of 190 prints composing what the artist found in a tropical rainforest. Ms. Allen's discussion and the examples she showed provided Club members with an understanding of how these artists are stretching the limits of traditional imagery and techniques and why they wish to do so.

Joseph Goddhu, the next speaker, pointed out that expediency and economics determined the print making process in the past. The traditional definition of a print in terms of a limited edition and a signature, he believes, developed from 19th and 20 century practice that enabled the artist, publisher and dealer to get higher prices for the print. This is still true today as dealers attempt to protect a constrained market for published prints. However, Mr. Goddhu stressed that even to ask the question of what is a print makes the print too sacred. What is a print is actual-

ly the business of the artist. The artist should have the freedom to work in any media he chooses, and Mr. Goddhu suggested that the proper answer to what is a print is, "Look at it."

David Kiehl also recognized the immense variety of techniques and processes being used by printmakers today, but he reminded the audience that there is a great breadth of printmaking at any time. Thus, although there are contemporary printmakers for whom technique is the *raison d'être* rather than image making, there are also those for whom printmaking is still primarily an image making process. Collections must include both and understand what print making is at any given time, and at this time in particular. However, he also pointed out that the definition of a print is far more open today, including so much more than in the past. Posters, graphic design, photography and photogravure which are manipulated, scratched and brushed, Iris ink jet printing of computer images — these Mr. Kiehl believes can be considered printmaking if they embody the steps in the long process by which artist works out his image in new ways. What is important is the question of how much of the artist's working out is evident in the final image. If the computer print consists of a photo, ink jet printer and spit out image, how much has the artist done? Given these cautions, as a curator, Mr. Kiehl's answer to the question what is a print is what do I like, where do I draw my personal parameters and how can I encompass the breadth of printmaking today.

Alan Stone presented another perspective based on his expertise in old master prints and drawings. He explained that prints were produced by hand technology until the late 1800's. The artist worked the design on a board or on a metal plate, inked it and transferred it onto a sheet of paper. The primary question during this period was not what is a print, but who was the artist? Today we tend to think the man who made the design is the real artist and the executor is a factotum, only a craftsman. But before the late 19th and the 20th century there was no hierarchy. The engraver was also seen as an artist, and the artistic success of the print was dependant upon the brilliance of the engraver as well as the quality of the artist's image. For historical prints, therefore, aesthetic value comes from the quality of the technique, the quality of the impression, the state of the paper, and most important whether the character of the impression itself conveys the original inspiration of the artist or has become compromised by the re-working and reprinting of old plates in edition after edition. The crucial question for old master prints is not what is the technique used, or what is its age, but how well does the impression itself convey the artist's intention. These are questions of connoisseurship when dealing with the older print.

Robert Feldman of the Parasol Press, publisher of prints, reiterated the view that what is important for defining the print is not the method itself, but what the artist makes with this technique. It is the artist's image that is important, not how he does it. Mr. Feldman pointed out that in the 20th century limiting the number of impressions became a commercially viable option. Louise Nevelson's early prints, for example, were in editions of 20. Old master plates, on the other hand, were never cancelled because the plates had commercial value. Hence, Rembrandt plates went

through a series of re-etchings. It was commercially viable to continue using the plates not merely because prints were works of art but also because prints were a primary source of information. Today, photography has taken on this function of providing a cheap way to convey information. Hence, the value of the print in the 20th century is generally thought of in terms of limited editions, although they are larger today than in the 1930's and 40's. The importance is not in the state of the print as is true for old master prints, or in the method of printing, but in the image itself. Mr. Feldman concluded with the example of Winslow Homer whose drawings for Harper's Magazine were carved into woodcuts by others. Today these magazine illustrations possess great commercial value because they are considered Homer's images.

The symposium concluded with questions from the audience. Computer prints, in particular, generated great

interest. It was pointed out that the artist working with computers can create combinations from photos, free hand drawings, illustrations, videos, etc. and come out with a spectacular work of art. The question, however, is how to evaluate these images and what makes them different from photos. Archival quality is also important and no one knows yet how long ink used in computer generated images will last.

The panel agreed, however, that the new crossover techniques discussed in the symposium should be seen as opportunities for artists and collectors to expand their expertise rather than to be rigidly confined by traditional categories. The Club wishes to thank the distinguished participants who presented their stimulating and thought-provoking discussion of contemporary print-making. Our particular thanks to Ms. Lynn Henry who moderated the panel.

Jack Rennart Speaks on Poster Art

Significant differences between poster art and prints was a main topic of Jack Rennart's talk on May 2 to Club members prior to their viewing of a pre-auction exhibition at Poster Auctions International. Mr. Rennart is a recognized authority in the field of poster art whose personal collection numbers between 40,000 and 50,000 posters. He pointed out that the poster artist has a different objective than the print artist, illustrating this difference with a finely detailed print of Jane Avril by Toulouse Lautrec in contrast with his poster of the same subject in bold black and orange designed to be an immediate and compelling image. The poster is in the service of an event with the object of persuading the viewer to buy a product or take an action. Consequently, its means must be direct, simple and graphically compelling. Lines must be simplified and colors bold. Mr. Rennart also pointed out that unlike prints, rarity which effects value is not based on the number of impressions printed but on the number that have survived, since posters, produced in the thousands, had a life expectancy of a few weeks when pasted on walls and billboards. Although a large number of posters from the 1890's and pre-World War I France

were saved because of collector interest, posters from the 1920's and 1930's are rare because few posters were collected during this period. Contemporary posters, Mr. Rennart believes, have largely lost the aim of persuasion and tend to be paintings or drawings reproduced as posters and valuable primarily as souvenirs of a visit to a museum or of an event rather than as poster art.

Mr. Rennart also provided a brief but intensive history of poster art as he led Club members in a walk-through of the exhibition. He concentrated on key figures: Jules Chéret who revolutionized the art by inventing the means of economically printing color lithographic posters through the use of only three colors; Mucha who was synonymous with Art Nouveau; Capiello who revolutionized advertising art between the Art Nouveau and Art Deco period; and Cassandre the most important artist of the 20th century whose Art Deco posters of trains and ships introduced the excitement of travel itself. Mr. Rennart also pointed out that American posters between the wars are valuable not so much for their graphic design but for their interest as documents illustrating American life.

Talk by Painter and Printmaker Hananiah Harari at the Montclair Art Museum

On May 18, members of the Print Club and their guests were invited by Gail Stavitsky, Curator of Collections of the Montclair Museum of Art, to attend a gallery talk by Hananiah Harari. The talk was in conjunction with the Museum's retrospective show of six decades of painting and works on paper by Mr. Harari. Born in 1912, Mr. Harari was an original member of the American Abstract Artists Group and worked with the Federal Arts Project. He studied with Leger, L'Hôte and Gromaire in Paris. His work is represented in many public collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the Museum of Modern Art in New York as well as the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Albright Art Gallery and the San Francisco Museum of Art.

Mr. Harari has been a professional artist for sixty years, and he gave a delightful presentation of his life and the

art he produced over this lengthy period of time. His work is very diverse, and he had many different periods in which he used a variety of styles. After a charming, interesting and humorous presentation, he asked the audience to present questions, and in response to the question whether he was still painting, he assured those present that he was still a very active artist.

Members were also invited to attend a special tour of the Museum's permanent collection led by Ms. Stavitsky and to view an exhibit of the works of the Western Impressionist artist, Guy Rose. Members who attended not only enjoyed listening to Mr. Harari speak on his sixty years of involvement in American art but also enjoyed their tour of the beautiful Montclair Museum. We wish to thank Ms. Stavitsky for making possible the delightful afternoon we spent at the Museum.

Members Reception at the Susan Teller Gallery

On Thursday, July 10, Susan Teller opened a new show of prints and drawings on the subject of dance and invited Club members and their guests to drink wine, dance to music and to view the exhibition entitled, "Shall We Dance." The exhibition included prints from the 20's showing night club and tea dances, depictions of the marathons of the 30's and jitterbugging couples of the 40's. John Sloan, Thomas Hart Benton, Howard Cook, and Peggy Bacon were only a few of the master print makers who caught a special moment on the dance floor. Miguel Covarrubias did a wonderful lithograph of Harlem dancers doing the Lindy Hop and Charles Demuth was represented by a pencil drawing of dancers at the Black and White Ball in 1928. The event drew a large attendance and many of our members joined in the dancing. Our thanks to Susan Teller for a truly unusual and exciting evening.

News and Notes

Fredrick Mershimer who created the Club's first Presentation Print is a member of the Board of the Manhattan Graphic Center. The Center has moved to larger quarters at 481 Washington Street. Mr. Mershimer was instrumental in designing space and furnishings for the new studio. The Center offers basic courses in etching, lithography and silk screen as well as short seminars in new processes such as silicon intaglio and polaroid transfer. An exhibition of works by faculty members can be seen through October 29. Print Club members have been invited by Mr. Mershimer to a lecture and tour of the Center on Monday, December 8 at 6 p.m.

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